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THE METAPHORS FOR DEATH AND THE DEATH OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN POETRY. AN ANALYSIS BASED ON EMILY DICKINSON'S POEM *BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH*

The basic idea that grounds the cognitive poetics Program, initiated by G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989), starts from the assumption that the process of meaning creation in poetic texts is illustrated by the same principle as the one that guides the "metaphors we live by", i.e. the conceptual metaphors which are the very core of our ordinary language. Moreover, the authors claim that the power of poetic metaphor consists in the poet's "talent" and "skills" to master the conventionalized metaphors in such ways as to consciously "extend", "elaborate", "compose" or "question" the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language[1]. Perhaps the most controversial ingredient of this theory is represented by the claim that the four mentioned "transformations" are "unessential" and thus, they do not "invalidate" neither "the generic structure of the target domain" of the metaphor (or of the "target image") nor our commonly shared "model of the world".

In contradistinction to cognitive poetics view, I propose that poetic metaphors are not *derived from* our conventionalized conceptual metaphors. My argumentation will focus on a succinct examination of the metaphors for death from a single poem, namely from Emily Dickinson's poem *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*[2]. The analysis will be pursued from the perspective of an "anthropological" approach to poetics, as illustrated in M. Borcilă (1997a, 2002)[3].

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[1] More precisely, G. Lakoff, M. Turner refer to four "transformations", which would distinguish the poetic metaphor from the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language: (1) the "*extension*" of the conventionalized metaphors by the mapping of "additional slots"; (2) the "*questioning*" of these metaphors beyond "the boundaries of our everyday metaphorical understanding of important concepts" (Lakoff, Turner 1989, p. 69); (3) their "*elaboration*" in "unusual" ways; (4) the "*composition*" of at least two conventional metaphors in order "to produce a richer and more complex set of metaphorical connections" (*ibidem*, p. 71). These "transformations" are not supposed to involve a different functional principle from the one governing the metaphoric process within language.

[2] The poem is enclosed in *Appendix*.

[3] For more than two decades, M. Borcilă is involved in a far-reaching, interdisciplinary project of developing an *anthropological* poetics. More specifically, his original project aims at

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In a few, but decisive studies, M. Borcilă argues that in spite of all disagreements with cognitive poetics, a possible area of agreement between these two directions in poetics can also be circumscribed (see, for example Borcilă 1997a, 1997b, 2001). The major coordinates that allow such rapprochement are: (1) the common objective of both directions of exploring "the meaning creation in poetics texts *proceeding from a semantic process*" (Borcilă 1997a, p. 97; emphasis in original) and (2) cognitive poetics' acknowledgement of the conventionalized structures as "subliminally present and semantically active in our language and thinking" (*ibidem*, p. 98). However, the author agrees that this rapprochement cannot be elaborated while preserving the conceptual and theoretical framework that grounds cognitive poetics[4]. Over the past years much work has been done for integrating cognitive poetics within "the integralist studies" Program in Cluj-Napoca. Within these studies, many findings of the cognitive project have already been reinterpreted from a coherent perspective, whose core principles presuppose: (a) the dissociation of poetic metaphor as a *functionally distinct type of metaphor* (from the metaphor in language); (b) the correlation between *the poetic function* and *the proper finality of poetic texts*, and the projection of the poetic function in *its distinctiveness* (as function of worlds creation); (c) the conceiving of the process of meaning creation in poetic texts as a *dynamic-constructive process*, able to account for both "*the surplus of meaning*" and the emergence of an "*imagined world*" in poetic texts.

Since today the current approaches to literary texts are "dramatically" divided into two branches, one emphasizing "*the discontinuity*", the other "the *continuity* between metaphor in literature and metaphor in non-literary language" – as recently summarized by E. Semino, G. Steen's (2008, p. 233)[5] –, I think the viewpoint of the anthropological approach in poetics seems to be the most appropriate attempt toward explaining the metaphorical creativity in poetic texts. This approach integrates in the first moment both language and poetry in the *genus proximum* of creative activities on the strength of the Coserian thesis of the "essentially common nature" of "linguaggio e le altre forme della creazione spirituale"[6] (Borcilă 2008, p. 255),

"reconstructing" the theory of culture proposed by L. Blaga (1937) on the *semantic* basis provided by E. Coseriu's integral semantics, where the central category of *metaphor* plays the interdisciplinary unifying role. This kind of "cultural anthropological" approach should not be confused with the so-called "Anthropological Poetics" promoted in the American context, for example, by Brady et al. (see Brady 1991).

[4] M. Borcilă (1997a, 1997b, 2001) argues that core concepts such as Invariance Principle or Hypothesis and The Great Chain of Being are mainly responsible for cognitive poetics' failure to account for the distinctiveness of metaphorical creativity in poetic texts.

[5] The authors however consider that both trends are correct and that any attempt to explain the poetic creativity should take into account the metaphorical creativity both in literary texts and in non-literary discourses. Thus, strictly referring to G. Lakoff, M. Turner's approach (1989), E. Semino, G. Steen (2008) also agree that "metaphorical creativity" in poetic texts cannot be reduced to their "four types of creativity", because these types prove to be insufficient for explaining "the variety and complexity of metaphorical phenomena" in literature.

[6] This thesis ranges the language as "the basic form of culture" and thus, as "the primordial [form of culture] with respect to the other cultural activities" (Boc 2007, p. 57).

allowing at the same time to account for their specific "functional autonomy". From this perspective, there is certainly both "continuity" and "discontinuity" between metaphor in language and metaphor in poetic texts, as E. Semino, G. Steen (2008) have also pleaded for, but only in the very precise sense of understanding poetic metaphor as "virtually *distinct*" from metaphor in language and "*only grounded* in the semantic «possibilities» of language as such" (Borcilă 1997/2010).

Moreover, the "functional dichotomy" between the two kinds of metaphors – the linguistic metaphor with its *expressive function*, respectively the poetic metaphor with the *function* of creating imagined poetic worlds– has been proposed in a strong correlation with the specific *functional principle* – linguistic vs. trans-linguistic or poetic –, governing each of these types of metaphor. In this view, the metaphoric process in language is oriented towards the semantic specification of some concrete aspects of our experience[7], and thus the functional principle within language does not contradict our "routine experience". Rather it functions in analogy with our ordinary "model of the world", which has been extensively theorized in cognitive poetics under the name of The Great Chain of Being[8]. In contrast to linguistic metaphor, the poetic metaphor goes beyond the boundaries of the first semantic level of language[9], and brings a newly created "metaphorical world"[10] This new world (1) either is an 'image' of the 'reality' (the poetic world is *analogous* to, although autonomous in relation to, the 'real' world) (2) or "trans-substantiates" it (in this case, the metaphoric world is conceived as being essentially *dis-analogous* in relation to the 'real' one). In both situations, however, the "vision" created in the "making" process of the "metaphorical worlds" is *qualitatively* different and *ontologically* distinct from the one within language. The "surplus of meaning brought about by the poetic metaphoric 'jump' (Borcilă 1997a, p. 102)" calls for the "suspension" of our "ordinary meaning of facts" (and, implicitly, of our "model of the world") as well as for the replacement of the latter with the newly created "pattern" in or through such metaphorical "jump". Therefore, it can be assumed that the two functional principles are distinguishable, as also argued by O. Boc (2007, p. 57), by means of the "fundamental criterion of *the preservation* vs. *the avoidance or the suspension* of the «ordinary meaning of facts» or, in Coserian terms, in relation to the knowledge of the world and to the general principles of thought"[11]. It is in this sense that M. Borcilă's critique against

[7] See Coseriu 1985a.

[8] "The Great Chain of Being" is defined as the fundamental cognitive model of our thinking which functions as an intuitive and unconscious "background" against which "we make sense of and impose order in the universe" (Lakoff, Turner 1989, pp. 166–181). G. Lakoff, M. Turner claim that this "model of the world" is meant to ground not only our ordinary way of speaking, but also our "understanding of the worldviews" from poetry, science, mythology, etc. For a possible rapprochement between cognitive poetics' concept of the Great Chain of Being and E. Coseriu's "intuitive background of speaking" see M. Borcilă (1997b).

[9] See Coseriu 1985b.

[10] See the similarity of this approach with S.R. Levin's theory of "metaphorical worlds" (1988).

[11] See some recent comments on this concept in J. Zlatev (2011).

the "constraining" role assigned to the Great Chain of Being within cognitive poetics has to be understood. The author emphasises that this "constraining" role "can be accepted (*with important amendments*) only with respect to the creative processes *within language*" (Borcilă 1997b, p. 16; emphasis in original). On the contrary, the creative process within poetic texts can neither be "described" according to the same underlying model that grounds our ordinary language, nor can be "explained" as a sort of "extension" from the constitutive function of language.

According to the strategy proposed by M. Borcilă, in a similar vein with previous advances in "Integrationist Semantics and Poetics" (see Hrushovsky 1984), one can distinguish different semantic units, situated at different semantic layers of the poetic texts, which contribute to the "progressive" articulation of the metaphorical world. The minimal semantic units of the poetic texts are *the referential quanta* which open the process of organizing the poetic images in coherent imagistic wholes. On a superior level of the articulation of the textual sense, these referential quanta are organized in *referential fields*, created in and by the imagistic connectedness of different referential quanta[12]. The interaction between the referential fields generates the metaphorical "dynamics", which progressively articulates the "textual world". Thus, at the macro-textual level, this dynamics or "motion" can be studied using a set of three semantic strategies[13]: (1) the **diaphoric** strategy – two heterogeneous, incompatible *referential fields* (the two fields are usually *Anthropos* and *Cosmos*) are brought together, and thus an "irreducible tension" with our "model of the world" is being created; (2) the **endophoric** strategy – there is "an attempt to mediate" the emergent semantic tension by the retreat within one of the referential fields (for example, either within the referential field of the *Anthropos*, or within the one of the *Cosmos*); (3) the **epiphoric** strategy – the initial semantic tension is re-assumed and solved through the "imaginative jump" within a newly created referential field (in other words, the initial "semantic incompatibility is overcome (*aufgehoben*) through the creation of another «internal referential field» with the aim of reconciliation between essentially irreconcilable facts from the viewpoint of our background knowledge"[14]).

In spite of all the differences, I will try to argue hereafter that the four "transformations" of cognitive poetics are still of real help in understanding the process of the textual sense's articulation (and, implicitly, of "metaphorical worlds") in literary texts. Bearing in mind the conceptual apparatus and the theoretical background of the proposed approach in anthropological poetics, my

[12] O. Boc (2007, p. 61) emphasizes that the referential fields are semantic units created "exclusively" by and within the internal metaphorical dynamics of the poetic texts and, therefore, they cannot be understood as "designational" entities, i.e. they are not "recuperated from, or related to the extra-linguistic reality".

[13] These strategies are considered by M. Borcilă (1987, p. 186) as defining the constitutive "deep semantic dynamics" of the metaphorical "world creation" in poetic texts.

[14] Boc 2007, p. 60. See also Zagaevski 2005, p. 53.

analysis will prove that the supposed basic "transformations" of cognitive poetics are in fact *poetic semantic strategies* oriented towards "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, our ordinary experience in the world. The best example of the way in which the metaphorical process "constrains" the conventionalized metaphor to "contradict" the "parameters of generic level-structure" of metaphors and subordinates them to a different "semantic function" is the poetic text itself. The idea, however, has been anticipated by M. Borcilă (1997b, 2001). The author argues that if the poetic imagination (in a broad sense) really uses the same schematic-imagistic structures or "Image Schemas" as the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language, then these structures constitutes only the "*raw material*" (Borcilă 2001, p. 100, emphasis in original) for "changing" "*the structural type and the semantic function*" (Borcilă 1997b, p. 102, emphasis in original) of those conventionalized metaphors. Before proceeding to the analysis of the selected poetic text, I should confess that my choice for it is not at all arbitrary: E. Dickinson's poem was used as a canonical text by G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989) to introduce their main ideas about the way poetic thought works.

From the perspective of anthropological poetics, the images from the first stanza of the poem articulate two heterogeneous referential fields: the referential field of the Anthropos (henceforth, RF A) and the referential field of the Cosmos (henceforth, RF C). The minimal semantic-imagistic units, i.e. the referential quanta (henceforth, rq), which articulate the two referential fields in the first stanza, can be clustered as follows[15]:

RF A	**RF C**
rq 1: Because I could not stop (line 1)	rq 2: for Death (line 1)
rq 4: for me (line 2)	rq 3: He kindly stopped (line 2)
rq 5: The Carriage held but just Ourselves (line 3)	rq 6: and Immortality (line 4)

On first inspection, it seems that there is no semantic tension between the RF A and RF C. Yet, many scholars were "surprised" by E. Dickinson's view of Death. The positive connotation of Death, which flagrantly contrasts with our ordinary view, is emphasized by Ch. R. Anderson (1960, p. 242): "Death, usually rude, sudden, and impersonal, has been transformed into a kindly and leisurely gentleman". However, such short, but relevant remarks bring to the fore the ineluctable tension created in E. Dickinson's poem already from its beginning. As soon as one correlates E. Dickinson's image of Death as a "pleasant" gentleman (RF C) with the image usually associated to the involvement of the self in everyday life (RF A), the semantic tension becomes perceptible. The impossibility to "stop for Death" is interpreted by Ch. R. Anderson (*ibidem*, p. 242) as a suggestion for

[15] The referential quanta which further articulate the RF A and RF C in the second and the third stanzas can be identified following the same pattern. As concerns the images from the last three stanzas, their dynamics internally organizes the RF_3.

the fact that the lyric self is "too occupied with life herself to stop, like all busy mortals". Thus, though Death is seen as a "kindly" gentleman and not as a "grim reaper", as we usually conceive it, the emphasis lies on the drama of one's death: to die means first of all "to stop living" (Engel 2002, p. 74). For this reason, as Engel pertinently notices, the lyric self "realizes that she cannot recognize Death's power over her" (*ibidem*, p. 74). Once she would recognize it, Death would become an end. This image however should be connected with another one from the same stanza, which amplifies the tension between the RF A and RF C. This second image is particularly meaningful for "the metaphorical world" created by this poem: it creates a unitary, although heterogeneous image of one's life end as holding together Death and Immortality. Therefore, the images that articulate the RF C present Death as a Janus-faced entity. On the one hand, Death is presented as a stopping point, an end to the "busy" active life of human being (line 1). In this case the emphasized aspects are the mortality of humans and the understanding of Death as the endpoint of human existence. On the other hand, Death is a "bold adventure into the blankness" (Anderson 1960, p. 227) of Immortality (line 4). This second image is thus meant to emphasise that Death is not an end, since the human existence will continue forever.

From the cognitive poetics' viewpoint, E. Dickinson's famous poem on Death is structured by a set of conventionalized metaphors which reflect our "general and ordinary conception of death as departure" (Lakoff, Turner 1989, p. 2). G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989) assume that ever since the first stanza, the poem introduces the idea of death-as-departure with no return. According to this reading, what makes the poetic meaning of the poem is the "novel" way in which E. Dickinson "*elaborates*" the metaphorical mappings of DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor. The personification of Death in the first stanza, second line, as "a coachman coming to take away someone who is dying" (2) and "the details" of the Death's journey, i.e. in a carriage (stanza 1, line 3), are not supposed to "contradict" our ordinary metaphorical conception of Death. This should be the case because the conventionalized metaphors are not very specific with respect to "the details" of the metaphorical mappings. On the contrary, when one uses certain schema, there is also flexibility in "extending" it: "vehicles", "the driver" or "additional trajectors" that move along a path, etc. are "possible extensions" of the journey schema[16]. Yet, the way in which E. Dickinson elaborates "the slot" of the "driver" in her metaphor on Death raises some important problems to G. Lakoff, M. Turner's view (1989) of poetic metaphor. Firstly, concerning the *travellers (including here also the driver) in relation to the destination* of the journey, E. Dickinson's poem demonstrates already a turn: Death cannot be at the same time one of the travellers along the path and its "intended destination". If so, "the spatial logic" of the journey schema would crash. Secondly, insoluble problems arise also

[16] For a detailed presentation of the journey schema see G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1898, pp. 3–4); also G. Lakoff, M. Johnson (1999, pp. 33–34).

when we consider *the destination* of the journey: both Death and Immortality cannot be at the same time the destination of the journey. This is impossible, not just because each of them has distinct generic-level parameters[17], but rather because their parameters of generic-level are *completely incompatible* with each other. Certainly, Death and Immortality are not intended as two distinct entities, but as two heterogeneous 'faces' of the same entity or "kind of being": one that is oriented toward human life with its unavoidable end and the other that is oriented toward cosmos and its perpetuation. Due to this poetic image of Death, which holds together Death and Immortality, E. Dickinson metaphor does not "preserve" the second generic-level parameter about "the shape of the event Death". If the lyric self is travelling toward Death and Death is imagined as both an end and perpetual existence, it is not clear at all whether the entity will continue to "exist" or not, when "the final state" is being "reached" (Lakoff, Turner 1989, p. 82). The strong incompatibility between the images of Death makes the cognitive poetics' claims unsatisfactory. Hence, the *elaboration* of DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor is not an "unessential" transformation in relation to our conventionalized metaphor, as stated by the cognitive scholars. Rather it might be considered as a poetic (diaphoric) strategy through which the poet brings in collision incompatible images in order to trigger the semantic process of the poetic vision's construction.

Cognitive poeticians have also noticed the difficulty in interpreting E. Dickinson's metaphor for Death, and appealed to the religious tradition to maintain the "constraining"[18] role of the image-schematic structure in mapping. G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989, p. 7) specify that E. Dickinson's metaphor faces us with a case of "*extension*" from death-as-departure metaphor, where "the departure is seen as the beginning of a journey to a final destination". It is furthermore supposed that this "final destination" is in this poem either "the heaven" or "the grave" (*ibidem*, p. 7). Nevertheless, none of the proposed explanations is supported by E. Dickinson's poem. Cognitive poetics' first argument is rejected by M. Freeman (1995). M. Freeman argues that E. Dickinson's "imagery" does not reflect the cultural model of the Calvinist theology, underlying the usual understanding of the world in the 19th century. Thus, the author demonstrates that

[17] In G. Lakoff, M. Turner's view (1989), the parameters of generic-level that apply to death are: **(a) basic ontological category**: event; **(b) event shape**: "over time" the entity "*reaches a final state, after which it no longer exists*" (Lakoff, Turner 1989, p. 82; emphasis in original); **(c) causal relations**: "the final state being reached", the entity is destroyed (*ibidem*, p. 82); **(d) modality**: necessity (if the entity "no longer exists", it is necessary for the entity to be destroyed). It is obvious that the generic-level parameters that apply to immortality are diametrically opposed to those of Death.

[18] The "constraining" role is assigned by the Invariance Principle, which is supposed to be an empirically derived principle. In a brief formulation, this Invariance Hypothesis asserts that "when we map one image metaphorically onto another, we are constrained not to violate the schematic structure of the target image" (Turner 1992, p. 728; see also Lakoff 1990, p. 54). However, a number of studies demonstrate that this principle is "empirically falsifiable" (Jäkel 2002) and that it raises ineluctable "theoretical difficulties" for both "a general theory of metaphoric meanings" and for the "functional discrimination of *poetic* metaphor" (Borcilă 1997a).

E. Dickinson's metaphors for Death avoid any possible interpretation of life as "a path that has a specific, predetermined destination", namely "the heaven". Analysing the path schema in the context of the Calvinist religion, M. Freeman draws the conclusion that "Dickinson found it difficult, if not impossible, to accept the notion that «death» was at the «end» of a linear progression of a «lifetime» and that «Eternity» somehow came after. For Dickinson, Eternity was «in time»" (Freeman 1995, p. 648). The note is important because it is throwing again in the limelight the unbridgeable gap between the two 'faces' of Death from the first stanza and enforces the idea that E. Dickinson's dual image of Death is not 'rooted' in the same "model of the world" which underlies our 'ordinary conceptual system'. Since according to our usual understanding, Death can be either the end of life or perpetual existence, the poetic image of it – which preserves both incompatible 'faces' of Death – fleshes out the point that E. Dickinson's metaphor transgresses the commonly shared "model" of the world that is grounded in our "routine experience"[19].

The second and the third stanzas of the poem are an attempt to "mediate" the tension between RF A and RF C by the retreat within RF A. The dynamics of the metaphors from these stanzas shapes the endophoric strategy. It is interesting here that, though we know the companion to the journey is still Death, the poet avoids calling it by this name. Instead, E. Dickinson uses the masculine pronoun "He" as if Death is simply a gentleman coming to take the lyric self in a pleasant journey. In this way, the tension of the lyric self's encounter with Death is temporarily bracketed. The departure is now conceived as a "pleasant" and calm journey (see Death's "civility"), because the dramatic separation between the two irreconcilable modes of being – life and death – is no longer present in these stanzas. The journey of Death becomes rather a break within the everyday activities of life: "I had put away // My labor and my leisure too". The "labor" can be now interrupted, since the journey is only a momentary lapse from the ordinary activities. The journey starts "slowly", and its scenery recalls the various stages of human life: the childhood (the "recess in the ring" image), the adulthood (the ripe "Gazing Grain" image), and the old age ("the Setting Sun" image). The metaphoric segment about life stages is relaxing and calm, in tune with the whole endophoric sequence. In their analysis, G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989, pp. 5–6) explain that the third stanza of the poem is structured by PEOPLE ARE PLANTS and LIFETIME IS A DAY conceptual metaphors. It is true that these metaphors play an important role in understanding the sequence of events from this stanza. However, there are at least two objections against the cognitive scholars' interpretation. Firstly, this sequence is not a matter of "reviewing" the life stages, which one "traverses during the life's journey" (*ibidem*, p. 7) toward Death. Contrarily, the above mentioned conceptual

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19 However, M. Freeman's way of interpreting E. Dickinson's poems is rather in consensus with G. Lakoff, M. Turner's claim that poetic metaphor is "grounded" in the same "model of the world" that underlines our conventionalized metaphor (see Freeman 1995, p. 666).

metaphors do not relate the textual events to the past events from the life of the poet and the sequence do not have the role of recalling previous life experiences of the poet "in a flash of memory" (Anderson 1960, p. 245). Rather, the referential context is "suspended" and the imagistic sequence of the life stages should be interpreted as *imaginative facts*, created by "the poetic thought" in order to progressively prepare the articulation of the third referential field. Thus, the first objection refers to the strategy of the cognitive poeticians to interpret "the metaphorical worlds" from poetry against the same background that underlies our ordinary way of thinking. If we agree that the images from the third stanza are exclusively created by the poetic imagination, then it is also clear that the background against which the textual events are projected cannot be "recuperated" from our experience in the world. The textual background must be understood for this very reason, as created through the internal dynamics of the poem. The gradual transition from the more concrete aspects (see, for example, the "recess in the ring" image) toward "the bold abstractness" (suggesting the inactivity of death) evokes, of course, the oncoming Death as well. At macro-textual layer, this transition prepares the articulation of RF_3. From this viewpoint, the conceptual metaphors have a distinct semantic function from the conventionalized metaphors. Their function is to designate imagistic-metaphorical aspects that may be used as semantic-*designational* components of the textual poetic sense.

These minimal observations anticipate the second objection against cognitive poetics which can be shortly put as follows: the poetic metaphors are not derived from our conceptual metaphors, but they are subordinated to a poetic function through which the poet creates imaginative "metaphorical worlds". The remark makes fully sense if one pays attention to the symmetry in the appearance of the verb "to pass" in the third and fourth stanza. The repetition of the verb "to pass" throughout the third stanza leads to the construction of a converging image, meant to show afterward the conflict with the other one introduced by the same verb in the first line of the fourth stanza. The cognitive theory assumes that the latter is a poetic occurrence of LIFETIME IS A DAY metaphor. In this interpretation, the image "Or rather – He passed Us" refers to the "onset of death" and is the natural consequence of the completion of the stages of life described in the previous stanza. On a more careful consideration, the facts indicate the opposite. The occurrences of the verb "to pass" in the third stanza show that the viewpoint from which the lyric self is looking at her journey of Death is still *life*. Thus, for one who is speaking from within life, Death starts when one *is passing* "the setting sun". In the fourth stanza, the perspective is reversed: it is no longer the lyric self (accompanied by Death and Immortality) who is passing "the setting sun", but rather "the setting sun" is the one who is passing the travellers. The viewpoint from which the lyric self is now looking back at her journey of Death is no longer the life itself, but a certain point from within 'Eternity'. Although cognitive scholars consider that the first line of the fourth stanza do not introduce any substantial change in relation to the previous stanzas, the shift in the perspective and its significance for the articulation of "the metaphorical

world" in E. Dickinson's poem are also noticed by M. Freeman (1995). The author points out that what happens in the poem starting with this stanza is an unexpected "change", which "transforms the poem from an otherwise fairly orthodox account of life's journey to one that is more problematic" (Freeman 1995, p. 658). M. Freeman interprets this kind of sudden "change" right in the middle of the poetic text as a specific mark of E. Dickinson's poems about life, death and immortality and explains it as a result of the "tension" between two schemas, respectively between *path* schema and *cycle* schema (*ibidem*, p. 657). Furthermore, the author emphasizes that what E. Dickinson does in this sort of poems, is "to replace" the metaphor of "the journey through time" with a metaphor of "the voyage in space" [20]. There are a few, but important changes involved by this "replacement", which nevertheless play a decisive role in the hypostatization of "the metaphorical worlds" of E. Dickinson's poems on death, life and immortality: (a) "the replacement" of the *path* or *journey* schema with the *cycle* schema; (b) the addition of a "spatial orientation" to the main "temporal dimension" of "the journey" metaphor[21]; (c) a certain indetermination concerning the destination of the voyage because, unlike the metaphor of the "journey", the "voyage" metaphor does not "presume" "a specific destination" (*ibidem*, p. 649).

There is no doubt that M. Freeman's analyses grasp the metaphorical dynamics that articulates the third referential field of the poem. Thus, the "tension" between the two schemas noticed by M. Freeman is the tension that announces "the metaphoric jump" in the epiphoric. The "slow" beginning of the journey, "the leisure" in the everyday activities (stanza 2) and the events sequence about the passing through different life stages (stanza 3) may be understood as exploiting the linear temporal resources secured by the *journey* schema. *Mutatis mutandis*, as M. Borcilă (2001) argues, within limits there can be also agreement in this sense with cognitive poetics' view that E. Dickinson takes advantage in these stanzas of the same image-schema as our DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor. However, if E. Dickinson really makes use of DEATH AS DEPARTURE metaphor, she uses it only as "departure point" in building up her poetic vision. We can observe that from stanza four up to six and in contrast to the previous stanzas, the foregrounded elements are "the disruption of linear time" (Freeman 1995, p. 659) and the "abrupt" interruption of the journey "with the cyclic image of the movement in space" (*ibidem*, p. 657)[22]. In the fourth stanza, the verb "pass" does not illustrate any more the same idea of the passage *of time*, as in the previous stanza, but the

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[20] M. Freeman states that "replacement" does not mean that the poet makes use alternatively of both the "journey" and the "voyage" metaphor and of their underlying schemas in the same poem. Rather, the author emphasises that E. Dickinson makes *ab initio* use only of the "voyage" metaphor and of the *cycle* schema.

[21] See Freeman 1995, pp. 653–666.

[22] The grave is imagined as "a house", which is spatially localized – "We paused *before a House*" (stanza 5); the horses head for an indefinite place, as if Eternity is a location in space – "The Horses Heads // Were *toward Eternity*" (stanza 6)

idea of the travellers' overriding *in space* by the sun ("He passed Us–"). At the same time, the agents apparently engaged so far in the movement on a *linear* trajectory of time are projected from now on to a *cyclic* one. Since there is the "loss of « Heaven » as an anticipated goal at the end of life's journey" (*ibidem*, p. 659) in E. Dickinson's poems[23], the perspective of Eternity and the further description of the travel from this perspective would not be possible on a linear trajectory of time as the one required by the *journey* schema. Instead of showing the travellers moving along a "linear" trajectory, the fourth stanza projects them, as in other poems of the same author, on one "orbit" in a "spherical" or "circular universe" (cf. Freeman 1995, p. 657). From the fourth stanza up, DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor is no longer appropriate to designate any image from this textual sequence. Its "referential" function is restricted therefore to the imagistic units from the second and the third stanzas (the endophoric moment) and as such, this conceptual metaphor has only a *local* semantic role in the articulation of the textual global sense. In view of this analysis, the "*extension*" of DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor proves also to be a poetic (endophoric) strategy on the strength of which E. Dickinson challenges the ordinary understanding of Death as an end of the linear passage of human lifetime. The line "Or rather – He passed Us" does not simply marks a shift of the perspective from life to Eternity, as if the attainment of Eternity is determined by or is a consequence of the incipit of Death. Rather, the line suggests the opposite: the lyric self is from the beginning in Eternity. As M. Freeman (1995, p. 657) demonstrates with reference to E. Dickinson's poetic universe "paths are in fact orbits", "with the results that what seems straight […] is in fact circular and cyclic". If "paths are in fact orbits", the perspective of Eternity is logically prior to the perspective of life and the lyric self should be understood as living forever within Eternity. Therefrom the lyrical self looks both at the movement of the universe itself (the image of the setting sun that overrides the travellers) and at the voyage and the travellers. The linear order of the poetic text is deceiving, because it creates the impression that the travellers are in a journey from life to death and that they depart from here (life) in Eternity. Although M. Freeman (1995) develops an extensive analysis of the "voyage" metaphor and firmly sustains that E. Dickinson would never accept an understanding of "Eternity" as something that comes at the end of one's lifetime, the author loses sight of the importance of the perspective's reversal and its role in the articulation of "the metaphorical world" of the poem.

The further metaphorical development of the poem makes even more difficult to accept the cognitive poetic view on the poetic creativity. In fact, according to G. Lakoff, M. Turner's theory (1989), the first three stanzas are instances of a particular type of poetic creativity, namely of "*the composition*" of the basic metaphors of the poem. The cognitive scholars assume moreover that the way in

[23] For a short presentation of *path* schema in the religious context of Calvinism see also M. Freeman (1995, p. 658).

which the poet combines the basic metaphors of the poem preserves the generic-level parameters of Death. At any rate, this is the case here[24]. If the line "Or rather – He passed Us" refers to the "onset of death", then the generic-level parameters of Death would constrain us to make use of the following argumentative pattern in reading the poem. The end of the life's journey is Death. Since the entity is dead, it should not exist any longer, which in turn means that the entity should have been destroyed. None of these parameters of Death are maintained in E. Dickinson's poem. The journey does not seem to stop where Death begins. According to the last three stanzas of the poem, the travellers are forever in the voyage. Moreover, the existence of the entity is preserved after Death and thus the entity is not destroyed. Death could mean at most the end of the human life, but life is only one of the manifold aspects of the existence in Eternity.

The "dews and chill" reported by cognitive poeticians as serving for the understanding of the "onset of death" play a double function in the dynamics of the poetic text. The image of the dew that brings "quivering" and "chill" has undoubtedly the role of evoking Death and its coldness. But the image is used by the "poetic thought" with a specific function in the poem, namely to announce a *certain way* of understanding Death. Thus, on the one hand, "the chill" suggests Death, as G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989) claim, and as such it is the natural consequence to the events sequence described by the previous stanzas. On the other hand, the next two lines of the fourth stanza introduce a new element which motivates another, radically different perspective on Death. These lines clarify that the lyric self was cold not because Death starts, but rather because of her light bridal dress[25] ("For only Gossamer, my Gown- // My Tippet–only Tulle–"). The metaphorics of death-as-wedding vehemently invalidates cognitive poetic theory[26]. While usually conceived as the final point of one's existence, Death becomes in this poem a "fresh", "new start". Death isn't any longer a tragic event which comes with the inexorable destruction of being; in contrast, it becomes a "happy" one, which aims at expanding and fulfilling the being. Starting with the fourth stanza up, the journey ceases to be a journey toward Death, but aims at the replenishment of being. For this very reason, the superimposition of the image of a house on the one of a grave becomes also possible in the fifth stanza. G. Lakoff, M. Turner (1989, p. 8) interpret this image metaphor as being activated by the DEATH IS

[24] It may have been the same kind of misinterpretation of "the metaphorical world" that constrained the editors for a long time to drop the fourth stanza of E. Dickinson's poem. It is well known that the assumed reason of dropping this stanza is the supposition that it breaks down the whole coherence of the poem.

[25] Some author suggests that her dressing is more appropriate for a wedding than for a funeral ceremony. Moreover, Ch. R. Anderson (2006, p. 245) argues that "love-death symbolism" is one of the preferred motifs of the romanticism and that love has frequently been "linked with death for the romantic poets". See also M. R. Dressman (1977).

[26] For the confrontation of the cognitive theory with such a "fundamental metaphor" in poetic folkloric texts, see M. Borcilă (1997a).

GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION metaphor. According to this metaphor, one's life final destination is the grave. The image of the grave as the final destination of one's life is supposed to be connected afterwards with the image of "our going toward our own houses as a final destination" (*ibidem*, p. 8). However, this interpretation is both fallacious and reductive. It can be observed that instead of supporting the cognitive poetics' interpretation, E. Dickinson's metaphor contradicts in fact our ordinary understanding of "the grave" as the place where human body rests after Death. E. Dickinson's description of the grave as "a house" suggests the comfort and pleasure of the lyric self's feeling of being there, in her new life together with her "courteous" suitor. At the grave, which according to cognitive poetics is the final point of life's journey, the travellers only "paused" (stanza 5, line 1). Although one may still reply that the assertion does not yet completely invalidate cognitive poetics claim that the end of the journey of life is Death, it should be noticed that the verbal form "paused" suggests "futurity" and "the continuity of the journey" (cf. Engle 2002, p. 17). This view is also shared by Ch. R. Anderson (1960, p. 244), who rightly highlights that although the travellers "paused before a house", "the house of Death so lightly sketched is not her destination." Ch. R. Anderson indicates that the destination should be "Eternity": "That is clearly stated as «Eternity»" (1960, p. 244). As long as Ch. R. Anderson (1960) still looks for "a final destination" of "the journey", his interpretation seems to be rather in consensus with cognitive poetics' view. However, the reason why there is no specific or final destination of the "journey" is highlighted firstly by M. Freeman (1995). The author argues that since the fourth stanza of the poem clarifies E. Dickinson's option for the *cycle* schema and for the "voyage" metaphor and not for the "journey" one, the first metaphor does not necessary require that the destination of the voyage to be specified: in the "voyage" metaphor, the stress lies more on the idea of the travel and of the movement in space itself than on its destination. Secondly, the reason should be looked for precisely in the "vision" articulated through "the metaphorical jump" brought about the last three stanzas of the poem. As already anticipated, the image of the lyric self's existence throughout Eternity is central in this poem. Within the 'edges' of Eternity, her existence is passing by and becomes evermore amplified through the voyage in space, which has neither beginning, nor end and which lies at the origin of the perpetual shift between different modes of being. The travel along life's "path" or, to be more precise, along life's "orbit" is possible in such a universe as the one created by E. Dickinson's poem only if the lyric self is forever within Eternity. Otherwise, the image of the "incompletion" of the "voyage" could not be accounted for any more. We have already seen that the poem does not deliver any detail about the "completion" of the "voyage". The simple break taken by the lyric self and her suitor at grave confirms "the continuity" of the voyage. The marriage suggested in the fourth stanza and the image of the grave, which seems to be as cheerful as a house (stanza 5), could have provided a good reason for the voyage and travellers

to stop. Though stating that the travellers are heading toward Eternity, Ch. R. Anderson himself (1960, p. 244) also agrees that Eternity is not yet "reached" by the moment of Death and, perhaps, will "never [be] reached". For these reasons, the use of the verb "feel" in a present tense in the coda of the poem ("Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet // Feels shorter"), after a sequence where all events are reported as happening in the past, does not mean that the lyric self is remembering her journey after "Centuries" since her Death. Rather the present tense of the verb emphasizes the same idea of the preservation of the lyric self's existence throughout Eternity. From the multiple "orbits" along which the lyric self is travelling throughout Eternity – and which, contrary to the ordinary understanding, neither exhaust the being nor destroy it, but rather amplify it –, the poem refers only to the path of human life. As far as this path concerns, it is surprising that there cannot be found any element in the poem that would attest a depreciation of the human life in relation to Eternity, although the perspective of Eternity is much ample than the perspective of life. On the contrary, the poem starts and ends with a profound consideration of human life. In retrospect, "I couldn't stop for Death" from the first line of the first stanza (and from the title of the poem) becomes a symbol for the absolute value assigned by the poet to human life. This eulogy to "the joy of life" appears also in the coda of the poem, in a place where the emphasis on the stretching of Eternity over the centuries highly contrasts with the shortness of human lifetime. Here, all centuries together are seen "shorter" than the day when the life was challenged to be lost forever: "Since then–'tis Centuries–and yet // Feels shorter than the Day // I first surmised the Horses' Heads // Were toward Eternity–". The tragic dimension of the poetic "vision" lies therefore in the very fact that, although the lyric self lives forever within Eternity, the eyes of the traveller continue to look back nostalgically toward the forbidden realm of life that cannot be reached anymore.

The vision that emerges in the process of the metaphoric world's construction in the poem is very different from the one projected by cognitive poetics' standard interpretation. However, as I tried to argue in this paper, one may also take advantage of G. Lakoff, M. Turner's (1989) view of poetic metaphor, through the understanding of their four types of "creativity" as semantic strategies oriented towards "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, generating the "visionary" experience of a different ("possible") world.

Appendix

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH
by Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

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Abstract

One of the well-known tenets of the cognitive poeticians is the idea (already argued in Lakoff, Turner 1989) that poetic language makes a special use of the same underlying conceptual metaphors as the ordinary ones. In contradistinction to this view, I propose that poetic metaphors are not *derived from* our conventionalized conceptual metaphors. My argumentation focuses on the study of metaphors for Death from a single poem, namely from Emily Dickinson's poem *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*. The analysis proves that the supposed basic "operations" – of "extending", "elaborating", "composing", "questioning" of conventionalized conceptual metaphors – are in fact *poetic semantic strategies* oriented toward "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, our ordinary experience in the world.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, poetic metaphor, metaphorical worlds, poetic semantic strategies, cognitive poetics, anthropological poetics*.

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